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25 YEAR RE-REVIEW



# PROBABLE CONSEQUENCES IN NON-COMMUNIST ASIA [1] OF CERTAIN POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOCHINA BEFORE MID-1954

## THE PROBLEM

To estimate the probable reactions and consequences in non-Communist Asia of:

(a) the establishment of effective Viet Minh control over Indochina before mid-1954, or; the attainment by the Viet Minh, before mid-1954, of a degree of success which rendered the French union position in Indochina untenable;

(b) the intervention, before mid-1954, of US ground, naval, and air forces in order to prevent the fall of Indochina to Communist control.

## ASSUMPTIONS[2]

For (a) above:

1. No Chinese Communist intervention in force had taken place.
2. No US combat units had been committed.

For (b) above:

1. No Chinese Communist intervention in force had taken place.
2. French Union forces still retained a foothold in Indochina.

## CONCLUSIONS

### PROBABLE CONSEQUENCES OF A VIET MINH VICTORY IN INDOCHINA

1. A Viet Minh victory in Indochina would remove a significant military barrier to a Communist sweep through Southeast Asia, expose the remainder of that region to greatly increased external Communist pressures, and probably increase the capabilities of local Communists. There would probably be little initiative on the part of the governments of the area toward collective defense.[3]

[1] Non-Communist Asia, as here used, includes Japan, the ROK, Nationalist China, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaya, Thailand, the Associated States of Indochina, Burma, India, Pakistan, and Ceylon.

[2] The questions of probable Chinese Communist courses of action with respect to Indochina and of Communist reactions to a US intervention in Indochina are not within the scope of this estimate, and will be covered in NIE-98.

[3] The Deputy Director for Intelligence, The Joint Staff, believes that this paragraph should read as follows:

"The establishment of Communist control over Indochina by military or other means would almost certainly result in the communization of all of Southeast Asia and the exposure of India, the Philippines and Australia to increasing Communist pressure. Communization of Southeast Asia would, in effect, transfer the rice surpluses, the oil, tin and rubber, now largely available to the West, to the Communists and would facilitate their interruption of communication lines. The loss of the rice surpluses would weaken the bargaining power of the West with the rice-deficient countries of India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Indonesia, the Philippines and Japan, while strengthening that of the Communist Bloc."



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2. Most Asian leaders would regard a Viet Minh victory in Indochina as a defeat for the West and a major blow to US power and prestige in Asia. The policies adopted by the non-Communist governments to meet the new power situation in Southeast Asia would be largely determined by the psychological impact of the Western defeat, and by a number of contingent developments such as the subsequent policies and actions of the US, Communist China, and the new Indochina.

3. Thailand would be most directly affected by the Viet Minh victory. Unless the US were able to give Thailand a specific security guarantee and to convince the Thai Government that it could safely continue to entrust Thailand's security to the West, Thailand would almost certainly begin to reorient its position toward the Communist bloc.

4. The governments of India, Burma, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Ceylon would probably not appreciably change their present policies toward the Communist bloc in the absence of further Communist aggression in the area and so long as Thailand retained essentially its present orientation. However, Thai accommodation to Communism would probably impel Burma, and possibly Indonesia, to abandon their neutral positions in favor of an alignment with one or the other of the power blocs. If Burma should clearly reorient itself to the Communist bloc, India would be forced to reassess its non-alignment policy and the chances are slightly better than even that in this circumstance India would seek quietly to move closer to the Western democracies; Pakistan would probably continue its present pro-US policy, particularly if the US were prepared to give substantial military and economic support.

5. Nationalist China, the Republic of Korea, the Philippines, Japan, and the British in Malaya would probably continue essentially their present policies.

## PROBABLE CONSEQUENCES OF A US INTERVENTION IN FORCE IN INDOCHINA

6.[4] Nationalist China, the Republic of Korea, and the Philippines would tend to welcome a forceful US intervention in Indochina; Japan and the UK would at least acquiesce. These countries could be expected to give diplomatic support and might provide varying degrees of material assistance. The Pakistan Government would probably adopt a policy of benevolent neutrality toward the US action.

7. The non-Communist Indochinese leaders would support US intervention if they believed that such US action would soon bring the Indochina war to a close and would insure the independence of the Associated States.

8. Thailand, initially at least, would probably attempt to avoid involvement in the conflict. However, if Thailand obtained satisfactory guarantees from the US, it would probably permit the US to use Thai territory and facilities.

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[4] The Deputy Director for Intelligence, The Joint Staff, believes that paragraph 6 should be preceded by the following additional paragraph:

"U.S. intervention in force in Indochina would effectively stop further Communist advance in Southeast Asia, reduce their capabilities in Indonesia, and provide a bulwark to the Philippines and Australia; this would assure the availability of rice to the non-Communist rice-deficient nations and guarantee to the West the continuing availability of the vital strategic raw materials of Southeast Asia and its contiguous areas."



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9. India, Burma, Indonesia, and Ceylon would disapprove interference in what they still tend to regard as a French struggle against an Asian nationalist movement, and, at least initially, would be fearful of an extension of war in Asia. India would denounce the US action and would probably seek a solution of the Indochina problem in the UN; the other neutralist countries would probably seek to avoid any involvement.

10. Over the longer run, reactions in non-Communist Asia would be largely determined by the success of the US intervention. If the Viet Minh were quickly defeated without leading to a Chinese Communist invasion of Indochina, and if truly independent and effective governments emerged in Indochina, non-Communist Asian leaders would accept the new situation and would welcome the setback of Communist expansion in Asia. On the other hand, a protracted stalemate in Indochina would almost certainly reduce support for the US throughout Asia.

## DISCUSSION

### PRESENT ATTITUDES IN THE NON-COMMUNIST ASIAN COUNTRIES TOWARD THE WAR IN INDOCHINA

11. Throughout non-Communist Asia, consciousness of the full implications of the Indochina war as of other international issues is largely restricted to government officials, military leaders, journalists, students, and professionals. The nature and intensity of the attitudes of this policy-determining elite toward developments in Indochina vary widely and are determined largely by the degree to which appreciation of Communist objectives and policies in Asia modifies the nationalist and often anti-Western attitudes held by this elite. At present, however, nationalist attitudes are generally dominant.

12. Present Asian nationalist and anti-Western attitudes are in large part a heritage of the struggle for independence from the colonial powers. Many Asian leaders, particularly in India, Burma, and Indonesia, view Western objectives in Asia with strong suspicion and regard the Indochina war primarily as a struggle between indigenous nationalism and French colonialism.

13. Their past experiences with colonial rule and their present real or imagined grievances against the West tend to blind many Asians to the threat of international Communism and to the close relationship between the Viet Minh and the international Communist movement. Although most non-Communist Asian leaders recognize the internal Communist threat in their own countries and generally acknowledge that the Communist bloc supports the Viet Minh, many believe that the Indochinese nationalists turned to the Communists for assistance only because of French intransigeance, and some hold that these nationalists would rid themselves of their Communist colleagues once the French had withdrawn from Indochina. Some non-Communist Asian leaders even believe that their countries should accommodate to Communism.

14. The strongly anti-Communist governments of Korea, Japan, Nationalist China, and the Philippines, which rely on US power for their security, probably find US support for the French and Associated States a reassuring indication of US determination to resist Communist expansion. However, many Asian leaders, particularly in India, Burma, and Indonesia, are critical of US policy toward Indochina. They are convinced that the war has been prolonged by US assistance and that US "intervention" in what they consider to be a war for independence has further embroiled Asia in the struggle between the Western Powers and the Communist bloc. They also fear that US policies will lead to expansion of the area of conflict in Asia.



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15. Nevertheless, there is a growing though still inadequate recognition among leaders in South and Southeast Asia of the expansionist nature of Communist objectives and policies in Asia. In addition, there is increased apprehension throughout non-Communist Asia concerning the aims of Communist China, not so much because it is Communist as because Asians fear the expansion of Chinese power.

## PROBABLE CONSEQUENCES OF A VIET MINH VICTORY IN INDOCHINA

(Assumptions:

(1) No Chinese Communist intervention in force had taken place.

(2) No US combat units had been committed.)

16. A Viet Minh victory in Indochina would remove a significant military barrier to a Communist sweep through Southeast Asia and would expose the remainder of Southeast Asia to greatly increased external Communist pressures. There would be no indigenous military force in the area capable of performing the current protective role of the Franco-Vietnamese forces in Indochina, and there would probably be little initiative on the part of the governments of the area toward collective defense.[5]

17. Most Asian leaders would regard a Viet Minh victory in Indochina as a defeat for the West and a major blow to US power and prestige in Asia. The policies adopted by the non-Communist governments to meet the new power situation in Southeast Asia would be largely determined by the psychological impact of the Western defeat and by a number of contingent developments, the most important of which we believe would be: (a) the apparent success with which the Viet Minh established and maintained effective control over Indochina, and the apparent degree to which the new Indochina was dominated by Communist leaders; (b) the degree to which the new Indochina appeared to become a satellite of Communist China; (c) the degree to which Communist China and the new Indochina pursued either aggressive or "peaceful" policies toward their non-Communist neighbors; (d) the activities of the indigenous Communist movements within the various non-Communist countries; and (e) the policies and actions of the US in Asia.

18. Despite the numerous variables involved, we estimate that the following reactions and consequences are likely to result from a Viet Minh victory in Indochina.

19. Thailand would be most directly affected by the Viet Minh victory. The Thai Government's concern for the security of the country would immediately increase, and the government would almost certainly seek a specific guarantee that the US would protect Thai independence. Unless the US were able to give these guarantees and to convince the Thai Government that it could safely continue to entrust Thailand's security to the West, Thailand would almost certainly begin to reorient its position toward the Communist bloc.

20. The governments of India, Burma, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Ceylon, while probably increasingly aware of the Communist nature of the Viet Minh and of its relationship to Asian Communist power, would probably be slow to recognize the seriousness of the threat to their security posed by the new power situation in Southeast Asia. In the absence of further Communist aggression in the area and so long as Thailand retained essentially its present orientation, these governments would probably not appreciably change their present policies toward the Communist bloc. However, Thai accommodation to the Communist

[5] The Deputy Director for Intelligence, The Joint Staff, believes this paragraph should read as follows:

"The establishment of Communist control over Indochina by military or other means would almost certainly result in the communization of all of Southeast Asia and the exposure of India, the Philippines and Australia to increasing Communist pressure. Communization of Southeast Asia would, in effect, transfer the rice surpluses, the oil, tin and rubber, now largely available to the West, to the Communists and would facilitate their interruption of communication lines. The loss of the rice surpluses would weaken the bargaining power of the West with the rice-deficient countries of India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Indonesia, the Philippines and Japan, while strengthening that of the Communist Bloc."



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bloc would probably impel Burma, and possibly Indonesia, to abandon their neutral positions in favor of an alignment with one or the other of the power blocs, but would probably have little effect on the policies of India, Pakistan, and Ceylon towards Communism. If, however, Burma should clearly reorient itself to the Communist bloc, India would be forced to reassess its non-alignment policy and the chances are slightly better than even that in this circumstance India would seek quietly to move closer to the Western democracies. Ceylon would probably seek economic guarantees from the US and show interest in defense arrangements with the West. Pakistan would probably continue its present pro-US policy, particularly if the US were prepared to give substantial military and economic support.

21. In the event of a Viet Minh victory in Indochina, the governments of Nationalist China, the ROK, and the Philippines would almost certainly continue to pursue strongly anti-Communist domestic and foreign policies. The British in Malaya would continue to resist to the limit of their capabilities the increased Communist pressures which would probably accompany the extension of Communist power in Southeast Asia. However, the premised situation would facilitate an increase in Communist effectiveness, thus requiring an increase in British forces to counter it.

22. Japan would retain its pro-Western orientation but would insist that the US fully guarantee its security and economic viability. However, Japan would probably attempt to expand economic and political relations with the Communist states in Asia, as far as this could be done without jeopardizing its relations with the US.

23. Most non-Communist Asian governments would become more apprehensive over the activities of local Communists and might initiate more stringent measures against them. Although local Communist movements in Asia outside Indochina are not now capable of overthrowing existing governments, a Viet Minh victory would probably increase the capabilities of local Communists, particularly in Southeast Asia. If the local Communists should intensify their efforts in support of stepped-up political and economic pressures from the Communist bloc, the awareness of the Communist threat would increase in Asia. However, in the short run local Communist action would be likely to have less effect upon the policies of the governments of non-Communist Asia toward international Communism than would external Communist pressures and each government's assessment of the new power balance in Asia.

## PROBABLE CONSEQUENCES OF A US INTERVENTION IN FORCE IN INDOCHINA

(Assumptions:

(1) No Chinese Communist intervention in force had taken place.

(2) French Union forces still retained a foothold in Indochina.)

24.[6] Initial reactions to US intervention would vary among the non-Communist Asian countries and within each country, depending upon such factors as: (a) each government's estimate of the likelihood that the US action would lead to Chinese Communist intervention in force in Indochina; (b) the policies and tactics of Communist China with respect to Korea and other Asian issues; (c) the circumstances of the US intervention, in particular the attitudes of the leaders of the Associated States toward the intervention and the state of political relations between France and the Associated States; (d) the position of the UN with respect to the US action; and (e) the extent to which non-Communist Asian leaders estimated that the US intervention was of a scale and nature sufficient to defeat the field forces of the Viet Minh.

[6] The Deputy Director for Intelligence, The Joint Staff, believes that this paragraph should be preceded by the following additional paragraph:

"U.S. intervention in force in Indochina would effectively stop further Communist advance in Southeast Asia, reduce their capabilities in Indonesia, and provide a bulwark to the Philippines and Australia; this would assure the availability of rice to the non-Communist rice-deficient nations and guarantee to the West the continuing availability of the vital strategic raw materials of Southeast Asia and its contiguous areas."



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25. The Asian nations with a strong anti-Communist orientation would tend to welcome, or at least acquiesce in, a forceful US intervention in Indochina, viewing such action as evidence of US determination to prevent further Communist expansion. These countries could be expected to give diplomatic support and might provide varying degrees of material assistance. On the other hand, the "neutralist" countries would, at least initially, view US intervention with apprehension induced by overriding fears of extension of war in Asia. These countries would also disapprove interference in what they still tend to regard as a French struggle against an Asian nationalist movement, although this disapproval might be modified by some feeling of reassurance over the exercise of US power.

26. The government of Nationalist China would welcome US intervention in Indochina but would be concerned that US aid would be diverted from Taiwan. The Nationalist Government would probably welcome the threat of Communist Chinese intervention in force in Indochina in hope that, should it occur, it would involve the US in war with Communist China. The Nationalist Government would probably not offer forces for service in Indochina.

27. The Philippine Government would welcome the intervention and would probably permit the US to use Philippine territory and facilities. In addition, the Philippine Government might offer token forces. The threat of a Chinese Communist invasion in Indochina would probably not dissuade the Philippine Government from supporting the US action.

28. The non-Communist Indochinese leaders would support US intervention if they believed that such US action would soon bring the Indochina war to a close and would insure the independence of the Associated States. A threatened Chinese Communist invasion would probably appreciably lessen this support, unless the scale and nature of the US intervention appeared to Indochinese leaders to be adequate to deter or to defeat such invasion.

29. UK and some British Commonwealth forces are presently engaged in Malaya. The UK, although apprehensive of the possibility of war between Communist China and the West, would probably approve a US intervention in Indochina as necessary for the defense of Malaya and for the prevention of further expansion of Communist power in Asia. Australia and New Zealand would clearly recognize the threat of expanding Communism in Southeast Asia and would give full support to the US action. These three Commonwealth countries might be able to provide token naval and air support. However, none of these countries would be capable of providing ground forces at present unless units now in Korea were diverted for service in Indochina.

30. ROK leaders would be apprehensive that the US intervention in Indochina would divert US military support from the ROK, but would favor the intervention if they thought that it would involve the US in a war with Communist China and thus improve the chances for the unification of Korea under the ROK.

31. The Indian Government would probably denounce the US intervention on the grounds that it was undertaken to suppress a nationalist struggle against colonialism and that this US action would greatly increase the chances of extending the area of conflict in Asia. India would probably seek a solution of the Indochina problem in the UN.

32. The Burmese would be apprehensive that US intervention would provoke Chinese Communist intervention in force in Indochina which might involve Burma in war. The Burmese Government would probably attempt to maintain a neutral attitude towards the US intervention. However, if India initiated UN action, Burma might support it.

33. The Indonesian Government would be critical of US intervention, but would probably seek to avoid any involvement in the Indochina problem. Ceylon would be unlikely to take any official position.

34. The Japanese Government would probably lend diplomatic support, but without enthusiasm. The government would fear that the US action might lead to the diversion of US armed forces and material aid from Japan and might even involve Japan in war.



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35. The Thai Government's reaction would depend almost entirely on its estimate of the effect of US intervention in Indochina on Thailand's own security. Thailand, initially at least, would probably attempt to avoid involvement in the conflict. However, if Thailand obtained satisfactory security guarantees from the US, it would probably permit the US to use Thai territory and facilities.

36. The Pakistan Government would probably adopt a policy of benevolent neutrality toward the US action, although some public opinion would probably be critical of US intervention because of nationalist feeling and because of the fear of expanded war in Asia. The Pakistan Government would probably not support any UN action condemning US intervention.

37. Over the longer run, reactions in non-Communist Asia to US intervention in force in Indochina would be largely determined by the success of the intervention. If the Viet Minh were quickly eliminated or decisively defeated without leading to a Chinese Communist invasion of Indochina, and if military victory were followed by the emergence of truly independent and effective governments in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, non-Communist Asian leaders would accept the new situation and would welcome the setback of Communist expansion in Asia. On the other hand, a protracted stalemate in Indochina would almost certainly reduce support for the US throughout Asia.



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# PROBABLE CONSEQUENCES IN NON-COMMUNIST ASIA OF CERTAIN POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOCHINA BEFORE MID-1954

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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